



Right to a future: Climate change negotiations must be accountable to children

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century – and overwhelmingly children will be most affected. It poses severe threats to child survival and wellbeing, food security and nutrition, as well as children's access to education and protection. As a child rights organisation working with children and communities across the world, Save the Children has a role to play not only in pushing for a binding treaty to halt climate change before it's too late, but also in placing the voices and experiences of children at the heart of the debate. The negotiators at the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun and beyond must hold themselves accountable for hearing the voices of children and upholding their rights now and for the future:

- 1) The climate change negotiations must be accountable to children's rights, needs and capacities, and these must be explicitly referenced in any agreement.
- 2) Any agreements on climate change adaptation financing must work for children, including measures to reduce the risk of disasters for children and to strengthen social protection for families having to adapt to a changing climate.
- 3) Early warning on climate-related crises must be linked to decision making about financing and better linked to early action.
- 4) Children will be less vulnerable if they are active participants in measures to adapt to climate change – and they have tremendous capacity to be part of the solution.
- 5) Prevent catastrophic climate change: a binding framework for action to reduce emissions and stop runaway climate change must urgently be put in place – 2050 seems a distant future for politicians and negotiators, but for children today it is their future and they have a right to have it protected.

What is the problem?¹

The world is warming. There is clear evidence from a number of sources of a pronounced upward trend in the average global temperature over recent decades. Scientists have concluded that human influence, notably through the emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, is overwhelmingly likely to be the primary cause of this trend.

This warming will cause the global climate to be on average hotter, wetter and more extreme, with more unpredictable weather patterns, melting ice and rising sea levels. These direct impacts will most likely include:

- more disasters – droughts, floods, forest fires. The extreme events in the summer of 2010, including the massive floods in Pakistan and major fires in Russia, are consistent with climate change predictions²
- changes in agricultural yield – predominantly negative (particularly in African countries) – and decline of fish stocks.

- consequent impacts on food and water security – contributing to drought, increased malnutrition, water-borne diseases and food price crises, which in turn can lead to riots and civil unrest (for example in Mozambique in 2010).
- more people migrating from rural areas where livelihoods are unsustainable and environments are increasingly unfavourable to the margins of urban areas – and in the longer term there could be mass forced displacement of people from places made uninhabitable by sea level rise and desertification.

As some warming has already taken place and further warming is unfortunately locked in because of the emissions of the past, some of the impacts of climate change are inevitable. Though they are hard to map and quantify, it is clear that some are taking place at the moment. Poor communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America have already observed and responded to impacts on their lives (such as the loss of water-providing glaciers,³ decline in crop yields,⁴ and increasing droughts⁵). These are entirely consistent with climate change predictions. However, while some warming is inevitable, truly catastrophic levels of climate change are still avoidable if urgent action is taken now to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

The impact of climate change on children⁶

The leading medical journal *The Lancet* has described climate change as ‘the greatest public health threat in the 21st century’.⁷ The Global Humanitarian Forum has estimated that on average around 300,000 people die every year because of the impacts of climate change⁸ – Save the Children estimates that 85% of these deaths would be children under five.⁹ Furthermore, some of the countries predicted to be among the worst-affected by climate change, including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Ethiopia, also have a large percentage of their population below the age of 14.¹⁰

Children are not simply *one* group that is vulnerable to climate impacts – they are *the* single most vulnerable group. The climate change negotiations must therefore be accountable to children’s rights, needs and capacities. A first step is to ensure that children are explicitly referenced in the UN agreement on climate change – this is a glaring omission in the current negotiation text and needs to be addressed. Women, indigenous groups and youth are already included in the text, and children need the same recognition.

It is important to remember that alongside climate change, there are other trends that are making environmental impacts on poor communities more severe. These include:

- population growth
- demographic shifts, including increasing urbanisation
- growing pressure on land
- changes in land use, including deforestation
- increasing demand for water, food and energy.

Climate change can be described as a multiplier of these threats, deepening and worsening their impact. For example, the 2008 food crisis had a significant impact on child nutrition, increasing the number of malnourished children in developing countries by somewhere between 4.3 and 10.4 million.¹¹ Significant declines in crop yields, consistent with climate impacts that might arrive as soon as in the next 20–30 years,¹² are likely to contribute to new food crises in the future, further exacerbating the problem of child malnutrition. Similarly, some climate change predictions present the possibility of an additional 3 billion people exposed to water stress by 2060.¹³ This level and speed of change threatens dramatic increases in malnutrition and water-borne diseases affecting children.

Children are also at risk from climate-related disasters caused by extreme weather. It is harder to map the influence of climate change on extremes than on averages, but it is increasing. By 2015, the number of people affected by climate-related disasters each year is likely to rise, for a number of different reasons, by an estimated 50%, from an average of 250 million over the last decade to 375 million.¹⁴ Ninety per cent of disaster events are caused by climate-related hazards such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, storm surges and landslides.¹⁵

The combination of climate change with other trends in population and land use will also change the threats facing poor children. Many people, such as slum dwellers and displaced people are expected to be pushed into living in disaster-prone locations such as landfill sites, floodplains or hillsides susceptible to landslides.¹⁶ Poor provision of water, sanitation and healthcare to urban populations already has a major impact on child mortality.¹⁷ In the future we can expect larger natural disasters, more frequent small and medium-sized disasters, more slow-onset and cyclical humanitarian emergencies, more urban disasters and increasing uncertainty.¹⁸

Climate change will also impact on child protection and education through disruption caused by disasters and economic loss, and increases in forced and voluntary migration. Children on the move are often even more vulnerable, as they are cut off from wider coping and support mechanisms and may be separated from their families.

Increasing inequality

Existing high levels of poverty and inequality will be a key driver in determining exposure to climate change and its impacts. The vast majority of climate change's negative impacts will fall on poor children and their communities in developing countries. This is partly because many of these countries are in regions of the world that will experience the most acute impacts of climate change,¹⁹ and partly because poorer communities are more exposed to climate impacts through their reliance on climate-sensitive resources and limited assets to help them adapt to changes in climate. For example, a recent report in *The Lancet* has estimated that deaths due to the impacts of global environmental change on health in Africa will be 500 times the number in Europe – largely because of the weaker health systems there.²⁰

Climate change is also likely to expand inequity between rich and poor, rural and urban, men and women and different geographic populations. Poorer communities are often dependent on resources such as agriculture, fisheries and forests that will be particularly threatened by climate change. In Africa alone, more than 650 million people are dependent on rain-fed agriculture²¹ which already faces significant stress from water scarcity and land degradation.

The way the world responds to climate change must not deepen these inequalities. If we don't focus on poverty and inequality, we could see adaptation resources invested in protecting the assets of the relatively wealthy at the expense of the needs of poorer communities, thus reinforcing inequalities. For example, analysis by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) indicates that without additional funds for climate change, resources are likely to be diverted from health and education into water and agriculture, and away from Africa to Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.²²

The impacts of climate change will not be felt evenly by men and women, as they have differing roles and responsibilities in the household and community. Women

play a significant role in agriculture and produce more than half of the food in many poor countries.²³ However, women also have limited access to key resources and a lack of power in decision making, and often have restricted mobility within their community, all of which affects their ability to adapt to climate change. Girls' education is still less of a priority than boys', and in difficult times such as crop failure or following a disaster, girls are often the first to be pulled out of school.²⁴ This further restricts their ability to adapt, as they lose access to a key adaptation strategy – education – and also miss out on vital information on how to deal with disasters and climate change. Climate change will therefore add significant pressure to already overburdened societies and directly impact on the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While the threats they face are considerable, children are not passive victims of the impacts of climate change. Save the Children's experience across the world has consistently shown that when children actively participate in programmes designed to protect themselves, their families and their communities, the benefits are significant. Children are the citizens of tomorrow and want to be part of shaping their own future. Given the opportunity and space to do so, children can actively contribute to the fight against climate change and support their communities in adapting to its effects.

The international negotiations: state of play

Negotiations by the Conference of Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have been continuing, aiming for an ambitious agreement between all governments. These have been described as the most complicated international treaty negotiations of all time, as the debate ranges from limiting climate change emissions and technology transfers to funding for adaptation, to deforestation. Questions of sovereignty, the common good, pollution responsibilities, the right to development, and compensation for damages all complicate the negotiations.

COP 16 in Cancun will be an important step to secure progress and rebuild confidence among developed and developing country leaders and citizens alike that the real threats to children and vulnerable communities are being addressed. On the mitigation front, Cancun needs to pave the way for a legally binding outcome on the international negotiations on greenhouse gas emissions by developed and developed countries. This should be through actual reductions instead of offsetting and shifting credits to ensure that the temperature rise can indeed be contacted within the 2 degree Celsius as committed with the Copenhagen Accord.

Financing for climate change adaptation

As climate impacts are a fact of life, climate change adaptation will become necessary and inevitable, and needs to be urgently addressed. Those who are working in humanitarian relief and development will also need to ensure that plans for the future address vulnerability to climate change, and propose solutions that are 'climate-proof' and will reinforce rights even in the face of climate change.

One of the positive developments in the accord agreed by some governments at Copenhagen in 2009 was a degree of progress on climate finance – agreement that money needed to flow now, that new institutions were required, and that money in the order of \$100 billion a year would be needed. Agreement on finance – particularly the 'Fast Start' finance for 2010–2012 – is seen as a crucial trust-builder for the UN negotiations.

Although the details are yet to be agreed, for children in the poorest communities to benefit from the Fast Start finance and the planning for the longer-term flows, the financing must be new, additional and accountable. At least 50% of climate change finance should be spent on adaptation to tackle the impacts of climate change that the poorest communities are experiencing now. Climate financing also needs to be clearly defined and distinct from Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), and clear measures are needed to demonstrate additionality. Climate financing should adhere to existing standards of aid effectiveness, such as the Paris Principles.

The negotiations within UNFCCC have also focused on the long-term climate finance that is to be delivered through the establishment of the Global Climate Fund to be decided in Cancun. To be able to address the needs of the most vulnerable communities and children, it is important that this fund achieves the right balance across adaptation and mitigation. Priority must be accorded to the states most vulnerable to climate change. Also it is important that developing countries who are most affected by climate change have a key role in the decision-making and governance of this fund to enable synergy with National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAS)

Any agreements on climate change adaptation financing both in the short and the long-term should enable a focus on technological transfer through improved early warning systems, and importantly to provide a basis for early action. This means ensuring an appropriate window for disaster risk reduction and mechanisms to link information about early warning of climate stress – both seasonal and on a yearly timetable – to donor decision making. This is critical for vulnerable communities already dealing with climate-related disasters. Since climate change will increase the number of disasters in future, standby funds or agreements linking early-warning indicators to concrete spending on the ground will save lives, facilitate recovery and ensure the best value for money. This common sense idea has yet to be realised even where early warning systems exist.

The Millennium Development Goals – with their model of a compact between developed and developing countries – have demonstrated that with the resources and political commitment major results can be delivered. In Cancun and beyond, governments must deliver a meaningful outcome on both the political agreement and the financing agreement – no small tasks. However, the practical steps for adaptation and mitigation cannot wait any longer.

Solutions that work for the most vulnerable children

To cope with these risks, climate change adaptation strategies must reach the poorest and most marginalised communities and children, strengthen their resilience and build their adaptive capacity.

Before disaster strikes – DRR

One of the most effective ways to tackle the growing threat from increasing disasters is to invest significant resources before they happen – through disaster risk reduction (DRR). Save the Children's experience around the world has shown DRR to be effective in minimising disaster impacts while strengthening community resilience and preparedness, including among the poorest and most marginalised people.

As disasters represent one of the most significant climate change impacts and are already increasing in frequency and intensity, DRR needs to be recognised as a key part of climate change adaptation. Many of the countries most affected by disasters

and the predicted effects of climate change still require significant investment to ensure they are prepared for the challenges they face.

Save the Children's approach to DRR focuses on working with children, communities, local government, local NGOs and national governments, as well as institutions at national, regional and international levels. We promote a child-centred approach that places children at the centre of activities to prepare for disaster – including preparedness, early warning, mitigation and resilience-building. This work also provides an important entry point to work with communities to support them in adapting to other long-term impacts of climate change.

Health – prioritising child survival

Among the most widely documented impacts of climate change on children will be the impacts on health – including increased exposure to vector- and water-borne diseases and a lack of access to water and sanitation. These are already among the greatest killers of children today. To strengthen a child's chances of survival in a changing climate, national adaptation planning will need to prioritise health systems strengthening. This will include:

- strengthening multi-hazard early warning systems to detect epidemics or changing disease patterns before they reach emergency levels
- training and recruiting health staff to prepare for and manage health emergencies
- supporting health ministries to scale up to meet the health challenges posed by climate change.

Initiatives such as the World Disaster Reduction Campaign on Hospitals Safe from Disasters are essential to ensure that health centres and infrastructure can withstand extreme weather events associated with climate change.

Social protection and livelihoods

Globally, 1 billion people are malnourished and survive on less than \$1 a day. In many of the world's poorest countries, such as Niger, people living in chronic poverty rely on markets rather than their own production for up to 80% of their food needs. In Ethiopia, 85% of the population are dependent on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism for their livelihoods. Climate change is predicted to severely impact agricultural productivity, nutrition and food security.

Social protection policies have proved effective in tackling chronic poverty and food insecurity and should be better recognised as a tool for adaptation. Social protection aims to help poor and vulnerable people counter deprivation and reduce their vulnerability.²⁵ This can be done, for example, through livelihood support and risk reduction, such as cash transfers or crop insurance, as well as by supporting human development through free access to healthcare and education. Social protection can therefore protect, but it can also promote poor people out of a cycle of poverty and into more productive and sustainable livelihoods. This aspect of social protection will become increasingly essential as the impacts of climate change evolve and poor households need to move into less climate-sensitive livelihoods. There are significant lessons and experience that can be harnessed and combined with other approaches to adapt to climate change. Save the Children believes these approaches need to be significantly stepped up to reach the poorest people and children.

Education – a priority for children

Climate change demands new knowledge, skills and behaviour change, so that people can to reduce their vulnerability and manage climate risks.²⁶ Education has a

critical role to play in addressing these challenges and needs to be recognised as a key adaptation and mitigation strategy for the world's poorest and most marginalised children. Children who are healthy and educated have greater capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, for example by adopting less climate-sensitive livelihoods. Recent research by Save the Children in the Philippines and Thailand confirms that children themselves identify impacts on their education and health as the most at risk from climate change. Education is already recognised as a priority within the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a global blueprint aimed at reducing disaster risk. If better integrated into the ongoing climate change negotiation process, the significant experience that already exists in the education sector could contribute to fulfilling this commitment to children in communities at risk from disasters.²⁷

Evidence and innovation

Save the Children is working to improve the evidence base on the impact of disasters and climate change on children. We are also trialling and documenting 'what works' in order to better shape our programmes and those of others in response to the inevitable changes ahead. Some examples of ongoing work include:

Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance

Save the Children is a member of the Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA), a consortium led by Oxfam with World Vision, CARE and the ODI. ACCRA is working in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Uganda to improve global understanding of communities' adaptive capacity.

ACCRA has developed an innovative adaptive capacity framework which we are currently consulting on. We are carrying out research on existing DRR, social protection and livelihoods programme interventions in all three countries to understand whether these approaches build communities' adaptive capacity, and to identify how they can be strengthened. The findings will inform activities to influence local and national authorities and to build capacity. We will work with other actors, including national governments, to encourage them to adopt approaches to development that enable people to build secure and productive livelihoods despite the challenges caused by the changing climate.

Children in a Changing Climate

Children in a Changing Climate (CCC) is a coalition of leading child-focused research, development and humanitarian organisations – including Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision – that share knowledge, coordinate activities and work with children as agents of change. Before the climate change talks in Copenhagen, CCC produced a report highlighting experience in child-centred DRR activities undertaken with children in different communities across the world.²⁸ We have also held joint events in Copenhagen and the Global Platform for DRR in 2008 and are currently working together on groundbreaking research quantifying the impacts of disasters on children in six countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America, which will be submitted to the 2010 Global Assessment Report for DRR.

Working with governments in Asia to promote DRR

Save the Children is participating in a new ASEAN²⁹ partnership group (APG) with five other INGOs¹ to support the implementation of the ASEAN agreement on

¹ Save the Children, Mercy Malaysia, Oxfam, Child Fund International, World Vision and Plan International

disaster management and emergency response (AADMER). The AADMER is the first binding agreement of its kind and focuses on managing the risk of disasters in a region – including humanitarian response and DRR. Save the Children is co-lead of the project in Indonesia with Child Fund International.

Providing index-based weather insurance

Insurance has a role to play in reducing vulnerability to climate change, as it can protect key assets as well as manage risk. However, insurance needs to work for the poorest families and households if it is to be truly effective. Save the Children is working in partnership with technical service providers on index-based insurance to explore ways that new and emerging crop and weather insurance models might be applied to assist smallholder farmers. With insurance, poor farmers could reduce their risk exposure to make higher-return agricultural investments and improve the willingness of local financial service providers to lend them the capital resources they need. In Mali, we conducted a pre-feasibility study with Global Ag Risk (at the University of Kentucky) that analysed the opportunities and challenges for the market development of a rainfall-based index insurance product at the level of farmers or lenders.

Health insurance

In the world's poorest countries, more than 97% of the population do not have access to health insurance. For millions of families, a single illness can deplete their assets and push them further into a cycle of poverty. To create a model for providing health insurance to the poorest families, Save the Children is leading an international effort to provide affordable, community-designed and managed health insurance schemes in Nepal. We are launching our first community-based micro health insurance pilot in Nepal before the end of 2010, following a public awareness and education campaign. The implementation phase of this pilot programme is expected to insure approximately 45,000 children and adults in three years, with the ambition to scale up to reach hundreds of thousands more families. This community-based pilot has been developed in conjunction with the India-based Micro Insurance Academy, two local microfinance institutions, a local university and a local commercial reinsurer.

The above initiatives demonstrate just a few of the many strategic and technical innovations addressing lined issues such as adaptive capacities, social protection, health and child-centred DRR. Any robust climate change adaptation strategy should seek to address and enhance these links.

Recommendations

1) The climate change negotiations must be accountable to children's rights, needs and capacities, and these must be explicitly referenced in the UN agreement. The failure to mention children is a glaring omission in the current negotiation text and needs to be addressed. National government responses to climate change, such as National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), must include a specific focus on the needs and rights of children.

2) Climate change adaptation and climate change financing must deliver the right results for children, including DRR and measures to strengthen social protection. Climate change adaptation must reach the poorest and most marginalised communities and children, strengthening their resilience and building adaptive

capacity. The principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action should be embedded within all climate change adaptation programmes and plans.

3) Climate change financing needs to be provided in a transparent, accountable and additional way, with developed countries held accountable at the Cancun summit. It must be additional to official development assistance and national development assistance. Governments must not divert funding away from poverty reduction programmes to finance mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change to ensure that progress made on the Millennium Development Goals over the last decade is not reversed. There should be a window for rapid-reaction response that reflects the timescales of communities already facing the effects of climate change.

4) Early warning on climate-related crises must be linked to decision making about financing and better linked to early action. For communities already dealing with climate-linked disasters now, early warning must be linked to decision making about financing and better linked to early action. As climate change will increase the number of disasters in future, standby funds or agreements linking early warning indicators to spending on the ground will save lives, facilitate recovery and ensure the best value for money. In addition, communities also need to be better connected to national and regional early warning systems. Such technologies must be an urgent priority within the technology transfer arrangements agreed upon between the developed and developing countries as part of the new short and long-term adaptation financing.

5) Children should be included as active participants in climate change adaptation. While children are highly vulnerable, they also have tremendous capacity to be part of the solution: child-centred approaches must be recognised as central to effective community-level adaptation and should be funded by climate change adaptation funds.

6) Prevent catastrophic climate change. A binding framework for action to reduce emissions and stop runaway climate change must urgently be put in place – 2050 seems a distant future for politicians and negotiators, but for children today it is their future and they have a right to have it protected.

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